

Conservation Conversation

Volume 1, Issue 2

Winter 2010



In this issue:

- Match Funding Distributed
- North Idaho districts
- Sage grouse, DEQ rulemaking and NRCS news
- Decreased RCRDP interest rates
- WQPA Update
- Upcoming events and deadlines



Strategic Plan Updates

The Commission has a Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2010 – 2014 that was adopted in January 2009 following stakeholder participation and reviewed at division meetings across the state and two public Commission meetings.

The plan's vision is that the Commission and conservation districts be recognized as the primary entities in the State of Idaho to provide landowners, land users and public land managers with assistance and solutions for natural resource conservation issues and concerns. The plan also describes the mission, values and philosophy that lay the foundation for the Commission's priorities.

Those priorities are considered to be core functions with multiple action items and objectives listed for each one:

- Commission Responsibilities to Conservation Districts
- Commission Technical Assistance
- Commission Duties and Responsibilities Defined by State Mandates and Other Agreements
- Develop Statewide Leadership Role Awareness
- Commission Operations

Since the plan was adopted, there have been significant changes, including a 40% decrease in the state budget since last year and approximately 50% less state-funded staff compared to just two

years ago.

As a result, the Commission needs to update the Strategic Plan so that it reflects current priorities and ensures that responsibilities are being met to the fullest extent possible. To do that, the Commission needs partner input and is seeking volunteers to serve on a working group that will discuss and recommend changes to the Commission.

The intent is that the working group will be a comprehensive cross-section of supervisors and staff from large and

**Partner input on
Commission priorities
helps determine
where the Commission
should focus its
limited resources**

small districts. With thoughtful discussion, the Commission can determine what short- and long-term priorities should be based on available opportunities, resources and budgets. Commissioners Dwight Horsch and Dave Radford will co-chair the working group. If you are willing to serve or

want to nominate someone please do so no later than January 20th. The working group will meet by teleconference in order to have recommendations that the Commission can consider and adopt prior to July 1, 2011.

The current Strategic Plan is available at http://dfm.idaho.gov/Publications/BB/StrategicPlans/SP2010/SCC_SP.pdf.

For more information or to volunteer please contact Dwight Horsch at 208-221-4765, Dave Radford at 208-529-1360 or dradford@co.bonneville.id.us or Sara Schmidt at 208-332-1790 or Sara.Schmidt@swc.idaho.gov.

Calendar and Events

JANUARY:

- 4—7th Annual North Central Idaho Grazing Conference and Trade Show (see page 13 for more information)
- 7—Application deadline for Conservation Stewardship Program to NRCS
- 10—Idaho Legislature convenes
- 13—Ag All Star Banquet in Boise (contact 208-888-0988 for more info)
- 13/15—IASCD Board Meeting (Boise)
- 15—Deadline to submit RCRDP loan application
- 17—Martin Luther King Holiday (all government agencies and banks closed)
- 19—Commission teleconference to review RCRDP loan business
- 20—Commission Strategic Plan Working Group nominations due
- 31—AWEP and CCPI proposals due to NRCS

FEBRUARY:

- 8—Commission Budget Hearing with JFAC (Boise)
- 14/15—Idaho Ag Summit (Doubletree Riverside, Boise; www.idahoagsummit.org for details)
- 15—Senate Confirmation Hearings for SWC Commissioners (Boise)
- 14/15—Commission Meeting (Boise)
- 21—President's Day Holiday (all government agencies and banks closed)

MARCH:

- 1—Deadline to submit Antidegradation Plan and Certification to the Commission
- 1—Deadline for article submissions for spring newsletter (featuring Southwest Idaho)
- 16—Commission teleconference to review RCRDP loan business
- 25—Idaho Legislature Sine Die target date
- 30—District audits and financial reviews, if required, due to Legislative Services Office

SPRING:

- TBD—Commission Meeting (North Idaho)

2011 Envirothon

The 2011 Idaho Envirothon will be held on May 2 and 3, 2011 at the Living Waters Ranch facility in Challis, Idaho. Visit the national Canon Envirothon website at www.envirothon.org for information on the upcoming competition, which is going to be held July 24-29, 2011 in Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada. The 2011 environmental issue deals with salt and fresh water estuaries, which are semi-enclosed areas where sea water and freshwater mix. For individuals interested in volunteering for the Idaho competition, contact Nancy Weatherstone at 208-888-1890 ext. 102 or nancy.weatherstone@gmail.com.



Nominations Needed for Working Group by January 20th



The Commission is seeking nominations for a Working Group to discuss and recommend changes to the Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2010 to 2014. Co-Chairs Dwight Horsch and Dave Radford need stakeholder participation to update the Strategic Plan in light of the many changes since the Plan was adopted in 2009. If you are willing to serve or want to nominate someone, please contact Dwight Horsch at 208-221-4765, Dave Radford at 208-529-1360 or Sara Schmidt at 208-332-1790. See article on page 1 for more information.

District News

Request for Feedback - Proposed Rule for Allocations

As the Commission concludes the period for the Temporary Rule for District Allocations (IDAPA 60.02.04), a permanent rule needs to be drafted for use next fiscal year and review during the 2012 legislative session. The next version of this rule will consider the recommendations from the Working Group and feedback from the districts. Please forward any comments, feedback, suggestions, or other helpful information to Sara Schmidt at Sara.Schmidt@swc.idaho.gov.

Match Funding Distributed to Districts

Support and involvement from local officials is critical to the success of local conservation districts. According to state law, after the \$8,500 in base funding is distributed to each district, the remainder available has to be prorated based on the amount of local funding each district receives. This local funding is referred to as "match" and was defined in the temporary rule the Commission adopted earlier this year. Match may include cash contributions or the value of some in kind services.

A Working Group was designated and they thoroughly reviewed all original match submissions and requested additional information as needed. Working Group members were Steve Becker, Nez Perce; Dick Bronson, SWC; Tim Dillin, Boundary; Kent Foster, Ada; Terry Halbert, North Side; Terry Kramer, Balanced Rock/Twin Falls County Commissioner; Randy Purser, Butte/IASCD; Lori Ringel, Teton/IDEA; and Kit Tillotson, Portneuf/IASCD. At the November 17th Commission public meeting, match funding recommendations were reviewed and approved for all districts.

In summary, districts submitted almost \$490,622 in local match with approximately 14% originally submitted from in kind services. Following detailed review, the Working Group recommended that \$452,186 of these district submissions met the requirements of the temporary

rule. Most of the local match that was not approved was in kind services that were determined to be for a specific project rather than the general purposes of the local district.

Some highlights of the match funding:

- The base funding to each district was increased this year from \$5,000 to \$8,500. As a result, there was an additional \$178,500 distributed in base funding that was not available for match funding. The first round of state match funding was \$266,500 and it was distributed in early December. Due to the base increase, 39 districts have a higher total allocation this year than they would have under the lower base. Conversely, 11 districts are receiving a smaller total allocation this year.
- The smallest amount of local match to a district was \$2,000 (less than one-half of one percent of the statewide total) while the largest amount of local match to a district was \$45,000 (almost ten percent of the statewide total).
- Almost half of the districts receive between \$5,000 and \$10,000 in local match and as a result get 37% of total match available.
- There are 16 districts that receive less than \$5,000 in local



match. While that is about 30% of the total districts, they only receive 12% of the available match.

- There are 11 districts that receive \$10,000 or more and as a result those districts receive 51% of any available match funding.

In the interest of transparency and for district planning purposes, the Commission has distributed a spreadsheet showing each district what their percentage of the statewide match is. That percentage can be used to estimate additional funds that each district might receive this fiscal year.

Over the years, the Commission has made an effort to minimize expenses during the year and re-allocate as much money as possible to local districts. When additional funds are available during the year due to cancelled WQPA projects, staff vacancies or operating savings then each district will know what their share of the total is.

Additional information related to allocation of funds can be found on the Commission website under the District Services tab at www.swc.idaho.gov.

District News

IASCD Hires New Executive Director



The Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts recently hired Bret Rumbeck to fill the position of Executive Director. Rumbeck was born and raised in Turlock, California. He attended California Lutheran University and graduated in May 2002 with a degree in History. After graduation, he worked on Assemblyman Dennis Cardoza's congressional campaign, and was hired to serve as a field representative for Mr. Cardoza after the election. Rumbeck attended economic development and agriculture meetings on the Congressman's behalf.

In February 2004, Rumbeck moved to Washington, DC and started working for Senator Chuck Schumer, overseeing agriculture, water, Native American, and defense issues. In May 2007, Rumbeck started work for Congressman Jim Costa (CA-20), serving as communications director and handling Costa's foreign affairs and transportation portfolio.

Rumbeck and his wife, Kate Haas, moved to Boise in February 2010. Contact Bret at the IASCD office by calling 208-888-1890 ext. 102 or email bretrumbeck.iascd@gmail.com.



Partner News for 2011

The Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts elected Division Directors and Board Members for 2011:

President: Randy Purser, Div. VI
 Vice President: Kit Tillotson, Div. V
 Secretary: Billie Brown, Div. I
 Treasurer: Steve Becker, Div. II
 Director: Rick Rodgers, Div. IV
 Director: David Ascuena, Div. III

The Idaho District Employee Association elected Division Directors and Board Members for 2011:

President: Karma Bragg, Div. VI
 Division I—Sherry Klaus, Secretary
 Division II—Kari Schwendiman
 Division III—Charlene Wimpy, Vice President
 Division IV—Chris Simons, Historian
 Division V—Kathy Merrill, Treasurer
 Division VI—Lori Ringel

The Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts Auxiliary has named their 2011 board:

President: Michelle Purser
 Secretary/Treasurer: Lisa Hawley

The Auxiliary had a very successful breakfast at the 2010 Annual Conference. Each year, the IASCD Auxiliary sponsors the annual Speech Contest by providing the state level funds and prize money generated as an education award to be used for advanced education by the students. The speech contest adopts its theme each year from the NACD Annual Stewardship Week.

Around the State



More Time for Conservation Projects

Agriculture producers that maintain good conservation practices on their land may benefit from the Conservation Stewardship Program from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. This program offers monetary incentives to encourage producers to be good land stewards by maintaining existing conservation practices while adopting new ones. The next application cutoff date is January 7, 2011.

"The application cutoff date was extended until after the holidays, which gives more producers time to complete applications for this worthwhile program," said Jeff Burwell, Idaho NRCS State Conservationist. "The application process is a bit time consuming up front, but we think the benefit to producers is worth the effort."

"This program differs from other Farm Bill programs in that it offers payments to producers who already maintain a high level of conservation on their land and who agree to adopt new conservation practices," said Burwell.

In 2010, Idaho NRCS funded 202 applications covering 351,087 acres of agricultural land.

Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland and nonindustrial private forestland. All producers are encouraged to apply for CSP as soon as possible to ensure they are considered for this ranking period.

The application process evaluates an agricultural operation's conservation activities. The program pays producers to continue with conservation practices that treat issues such as soil erosion or water quality. Adding extra conservation activities can increase your payments.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) offers two payment types: an annual payment to continue existing conservation practices and adopt new ones and a supplemental payment for adopting resource conserving crop rotations. The per acre payments range from \$12 to \$22 for cropland, \$7 to \$14 for pasture, \$5 to \$10 for rangeland, and \$6 to \$12 for forestland. A supplemental payment, available only for cropland, adds an additional \$12 to \$16 for the resource conservation crop rotation.

Take the first step in the application process and complete the online self-screening checklist to see if the Conservation Stewardship Program is right for you; go to http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/special_pdfs/CSP_Producer_Self-Screening_Checklist.pdf.

For information on the program, eligibility, or a list of conservation activities, visit your local NRCS office. To find the office nearest you, look for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in the government pages of the phonebook or on the NRCS Web page <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/> under "Find a Service Center."

2010 Water Year Summary Now Available

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) just completed a summary report of the 2010 water supply year. The report also looks ahead to 2011's water supply.

"Each fall we estimate the snowpack needed to provide adequate surface irrigation supplies for the coming summer season," said Ron Abramovich, Idaho NRCS Water Supply Specialist. "Using reservoir carryover storage we project the March 31, 2011 reservoir storage. That projection helps us determine the streamflow needed to meet surface irrigation for next summer."

Additionally, the report details new Snow Telemetry sites and snow courses set up last summer as well as maintenance work completed on existing sites.

For the complete report, visit <http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/snow> and click on the link for the "2010 Fall Report."

Contact:

Jeff Anderson, Hydrologist, 208.378.5740
Alexis Collins, State Public Affairs Specialist
208.685.6978

Around the State

2011 Funding for Sage Grouse Conservation

Landowners with sage-grouse habitat could get help with habitat conservation practices. The Natural Resources Conservation Service offers funding to conserve or enhance sage-grouse habitat on private agriculture land in Idaho. The Sage-grouse Initiative will pay a percentage of the costs for implementing certain conservation practices.

"This initiative helps Idaho proactively support sage-grouse conservation," said Jeff Burwell, NRCS State Conservationist. "Landowners have the opportunity to voluntarily undertake practices that improve sage-grouse habitat and get financial assistance from NRCS to do so."

Examples of those practices include retrofitting existing fences to increase their visibility and reduce sage-grouse mortality; installing escape ramps for wildlife in watering facilities; deferring grazing in nesting areas to increase residual cover and increase brood survival rates; and treating noxious or invasive weeds to improve range condition and sage-grouse habitat.

For fiscal year 2011, Idaho will receive just over \$3 million for the Sage-grouse Initiative allocation, which is funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program. Producers can sign up for the initiative at any time; the 2011 cut-off date for ranking has not yet been determined.

Some of the projects that were funded last year include juniper removal to help restore native grasslands, removing fencing near sage-grouse leks, and seeding rangeland with native grasses and plants.

"This program meets a dual purpose; conservation of an iconic species and improved management of grazing lands," said Jeff Burwell, NRCS State Conservationist in Idaho. "We are finding that practices implemented to improve sage-grouse habitat are the same practices required to maintain healthy grazing land for livestock."

Additionally, NRCS worked successfully with the Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service to provide

'certainty' to landowners who enroll in NRCS programs to benefit sage-grouse. This action protects landowners from increased regulation should the bird be listed under the Endangered Species Act in the future.

For additional information, visit the NRCS Web site:

www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/sage_grouse/index.html.

Photo courtesy of Gary Kramer, US Fish & Wildlife Service.



Completed Local Working Group Sage-Grouse Conservation Plans

The Idaho Fish & Game recently posted online the completed Sage-Grouse conservation plans from various local working groups including:

- East Idaho Uplands Draft Conservation Plan
- Big Desert Conservation Plan
- Shoshone Basin Conservation Plan
- Jarbidge Conservation Plan
- Curlew Valley Conservation Plan
- Owyhee County Conservation Plan
- Upper Snake Conservation Plan
- Challis Conservation Plan, including amendments and appendices

These plans can be reviewed by visiting the Idaho Fish & Game website at:

http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/hunt/grouse/conserv_plan/local_workgroups.cfm

Kelly Named as EPA Region 10 Official

On December 5, 2010, Kate Kelly joined the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as the new Director of the Office of Ecosystems, Tribal and Public Affairs (ETPA) for Region 10, which serves Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Native Tribes.

Since December 2004, Kelly has served as a State Senator in the Idaho State Legislature and was elected as Minority Leader in January 2009, when she was also recognized as "Idaho Woman of the Year" by the Idaho Business Review.

Prior to being elected to the Senate, Kelly spent over five years as an Administrator for the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ), leading the air quality and waste division, as well as the Boise regional office. Prior to joining IDEQ, she served as a Deputy with the Idaho Attorney General's Natural Resources Division for six years.

Kelly replaces acting Director Rick Parkin, who resumes his duties as ETPA Associate Director.

Around the State

IDEQ Rulemaking: Water Quality Standards

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality's pending rule detailing antidegradation implementation procedures was adopted by the Board of Environmental Quality on November 10, 2010 and is now pending review by the upcoming Idaho State Legislature for final approval. The pending rule will become final and effective immediately upon the adjournment of the 2011 Legislative Session if approved by the legislature.

A detailed summary of the reason for adopting the rule can be found in the initial proposal published in the Idaho Administrative Bulletin, September 1, 2010, Vol. 10-9, pages 445 through 469 (<http://adm.idaho.gov/adminrules/bulletin/bul/10bul/10Sept.pdf>). After consideration of public comments, the rule was revised in Sections 010 and 052. The Rulemaking and Public Comment Summary can be viewed at http://www.deq.idaho.gov/rules/water/58_0102_1001_pending.cfm.

An informational meeting was held on December 10, 2010 for the purpose of developing guidance documents for antidegradation implementation procedures. Additional meetings will be scheduled. Details of the future meetings can be found on the IDEQ website (www.deq.idaho.gov) or by contacting Paula Wilson at Paula.Wilson@deq.idaho.gov.



USDA Requests Proposals for Water and Land Conservation Projects

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the USDA is seeking proposals for projects that will bring partners together to help farmers, ranchers and private nonindustrial forest landowners implement beneficial water and land conservation practices. Proposals are due to Natural Resources Conservation Service National Office by January 31, 2011.

Proposals are submitted through two programs administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service: the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) and the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI).

"These programs support collaborative efforts to treat resource concerns in a regional area," said Jeff Burwell, Idaho NRCS State Conservationist. "Project areas are established through partnership agreements. The partners work together to plan and implement conservation practices within a project area."

This collaborative approach leverages federal financial and technical assistance with funding from local and regional partners.

AWEP provides support for projects that address agricultural water-related concerns such as conserving water quality, improving water quantity, or mitigating the effects of drought and climate change. Idaho received AWEP funding in the past for projects that reduce groundwater withdrawals in the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer.

With CCPI, conservation practices are implemented to address a specific regional resource concern on agricul-

tural and nonindustrial private forest lands. It could include installing soil erosion practices, changing grazing lands management, or working to improve forest health across a region. Examples of recent Idaho projects include an Owyhee County project to reduce sediment and treat agricultural nonpoint source water pollution or the Southwestern Idaho Wildlife Habitat Conservation Partnership project to improve deteriorating wildlife habitat in Southwestern Idaho.

"Eligible entities submit project proposals to the NRCS National Office," said Burwell. "If the national office approves a project, NRCS enters into a partnership agreement with the entity." Once the project area is established, NRCS contracts directly with agricultural producers in that area to carry out project activities.

Eligible entities include federally recognized Indian Tribes, state and local governments, agricultural and forestland associations, higher education institutions, and nongovernmental organizations.

The requirements for submitting project proposals for the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) and the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) can be viewed at www.regulations.gov. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide financial and technical assistance to eligible producers in approved project areas.

Proposals for AWEP and CCPI projects must be received by NRCS by January 31, 2011. To learn more, visit: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/awep www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ccpi

Commission Corner

Tidbits

Improved Website

The Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission recently had the opportunity to work with the state web vendor, Access Idaho, to redesign and make improvements to the agency website. Improvements will include a live feed of upcoming Commission activities and deadlines, and highlight important information to make reference material easier to find. The Commission forms and fact sheets will be updated for the new site and staff is working on the Conservation Directory to roll out in early 2011. Any feedback or suggestions are welcome at anytime by calling 208-332-1790 or email info@swc.idaho.gov.

2011 Legislature

The Idaho Legislature is scheduled to convene on Monday, January 10th with the Governor's annual State of the State and Budget Address. The Budget Hearing for the Commission will be Tuesday, February 8, 2011 with the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee. Confirmation hearing for SWC Commissioners with the Senate Agriculture Committee will be Tuesday, February 15, 2011. At press time, the annual legislative displays for districts

and the annual reports to the House and Senate Agricultural Committees have not been scheduled. Committee schedules, hearings and legislation are easy to follow at <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/>.

District in the News

The Yellowstone Soil Conservation District was recently featured in the Rexburg Standard Journal for their work in addressing high nitrate levels in the Ashton area. The Yellowstone SCD partnered with NRCS to obtain two Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative grants through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program this year. The \$420,000 in funding will cover approximately 75% of the costs for 27 producers to have lime selectively spread on their agricultural lands. The lime applications have improved crop yields by 40% by neutralizing the acidic soil and allowing nitrogen fertilizers to be better absorbed by the crops. Advisors were also brought in to test and map the fields by using GPS which allows producers to apply the correct amount of lime to achieve optimal results. For more information, see the article online at <http://www.rexburgstandardjournal.com/>

news/article_fc73b1b0-d73d-11df-9b00-001cc4c002e0.html

Tax Package

There has been coverage in the national media about the major provisions in the tax package passed by Congress and signed by the President in December. Beyond the commonly covered income tax, capital gains and unemployment benefits, there are a couple key provisions that affect conservation and agriculture:

- Extension of provision encouraging contributions of capital gain real property for conservation purposes and easements;
- Establishes an estate tax exemption of \$5 million per person (\$10 million per couple) and a top rate of 35 percent. Reinstates stepped-up basis and indexes the estate tax exemption for inflation;
- Businesses will be allowed to write off the full cost (100%) of new capital investments in 2011; and
- One-year extension of ethanol tax credit at 45 cents and tariff at current rates.

Tollefson Receives IASCD Award



At the 2010 Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts conference in Burley, Idaho, Commission employee Jordan Tollefson received the Agency Employee Award for his outstanding contributions to soil and water conservation in the state and his work with districts in south-central Idaho. Wood River SCD Chairman Carl Pendleton presented the award to Tollefson at the Educational Luncheon.

Tollefson works out of the Twin Falls Service Center and supports the Balanced Rock, Minidoka, Snake River and Twin Falls districts. He lives in Twin Falls and is the proud father of Nathan, who will be two in February. In addition to his dedication to conservation, he is also dreaming of the day an ice hockey rink is built in Central Idaho.

Commission Corner

RCRDP Interest Rates Lowered

At a recent meeting, the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission made a change to its revolving loan fund to provide farmers and ranchers with additional resources to implement conservation practices on their land. The Resource Conservation and Rangeland Development Program (RCRDP) is authorized by Idaho law to provide low interest loans to farmers and ranchers for resource management projects and improvements.

The interest rate for a new RCRDP loan varies from 2% to 4% depending on the length of the loan. New interest rates are:

- 1 to 7 year term - 2% fixed APR
- 8 to 12 year term - 3% fixed APR
- 13 to 15 year term - 4% fixed APR

Applicants may apply for a single loan of up to \$200,000. Existing borrowers may have up to \$300,000 in outstanding loans.

"We have over 200 active loans and expect to see new applications coming from operators and owners to the local district for initial conservation benefit

analysis," said Bill Flory, SWC Chair, from Winchester. "These fixed rates are a great opportunity to aid conservation in Idaho."

The first step for interested applicants is to submit an application and conservation plan to their local conservation district. The local conservation district will review the conservation plan and forward a recommendation ranking that particular project to the SWC. The applicant will then provide financial and collateral information to the SWC office in Boise. SWC staff will then prepare the loan package for review by the Commission at the next scheduled meeting.

In order to improve turnaround times, the Commission also scheduled a standing monthly teleconference to conduct any pending loan program business. The Commission teleconference will occur on the second Wednesday of every month that there is not a regular business meeting. Upcoming Commission meetings are January 12 and March 9 via teleconference. The Commission will also meet in person in Boise on February 15, 2011. Completed applications need to be submitted at least 30 days in advance of a Commission meeting.



The Commission works closely with local Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the wise use and enhancement of soil, water, and related resources. The Commission and local districts are committed to improving the environment, increasing public awareness of conservation issues, and supplying landowners and land users with the technical information needed to implement conservation measures and improve natural resource management.

For more information about the loan program or to find your local conservation district email info@swc.idaho.gov or call 208/332-1790. A RCRDP fact sheet and application form can also be found under the 'Programs' tab on the SWC website at www.swc.idaho.gov.

New Eastern Idaho Staffer

The Commission is pleased to announce that Brian Reed has accepted a full-time position in eastern Idaho.

Reed has a bachelor's degree in agronomy and a master's degree in agriculture from Utah State and has operated a family farm for over 15 years. He is a familiar face in eastern Idaho due to the contract and part-time work that he has performed for the partnership over the last three years.

In his full time role, Reed will be

the primary point of contact for the East Side, Madison, Teton, West Side and Yellowstone con-



servation districts. In addition, he will assist the Commission with all of our statutory responsibilities including loan program

promotion and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program activities in eastern Idaho.

Reed was selected from 18 total applicants and among five finalists that were interviewed. Special thanks to Carolyn Firth, who will supervise this position, and Denise Dahling, Randy Purser and Matt Woodard, who served on an interview committee.

Contact Brian Reed at 208-522-6250 ext. 110 or Brian.Reed@swc.idaho.gov.

Commission Corner

Water Quality Program for Agriculture Update

In Fiscal Year 2010, the Commission assisted 22 districts with funding of 19 Priority Area projects through the Water Quality Program for Agriculture (WQPA). In Fiscal Year 2011, there are 13 active projects sponsored by 16 districts. Based on projections from participating districts, the WQPA budget went from \$736,470 in FY 2010 to \$314,996 in FY 2011. WQPA-sponsoring districts need to provide the Commission a fiscal update and projection for the second half of FY 2011 and then will have until early May 2011 to utilize their allotted funds.

At the November Commission meeting, the Commissioners adopted an updated WQPA Operating Policy. The update to policy was needed to reflect the new name of the Commission, to combine multiple guidelines into one overall policy, the reorganization of procedures and requirements to better reflect program functions, and an outline on how funds are allocated and distributed among the priority areas. The operating policy is used to implement the Rules for Administration of Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share Program

for Idaho (IDAPA 60.05.03 <http://adm.idaho.gov/adminrules/rules/idapa60/0503.pdf>).

Additionally, the Commissioners passed a motion to budget unused funds to other existing WQPA projects. Approximately \$124,381 has been released by WQPA districts this fiscal year. Any funds that are not used by the existing projects can be released as a district allocation in June and disbursed under match funding guidelines.

Keep an eye out for new WQPA programming! The Commission is considering more flexibility in how the WQPA funds are distributed to districts and would like to see more project diversity. At the Fall Division meetings and the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts conference, the Commission received positive feedback in support of re-opening the Conservation Improvement Grant program or starting a new block grant program. Details will be decided in the upcoming months, so if you have any ideas for grants please share them with any Commission staff or contact Lance Holloway at 208-332-1794 or Lance.Holloway@swc.idaho.gov.

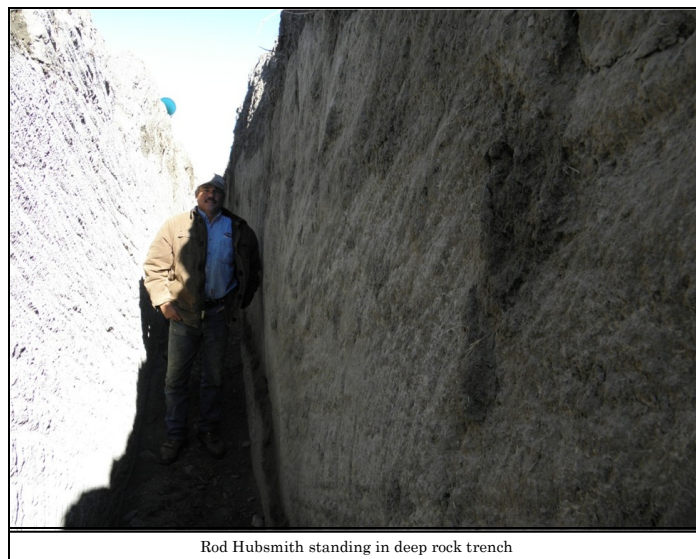
The Pilger Project

A Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative

The Wood River Soil Conservation District has completed one of two contracts that have been written on the Little Wood River (LWR) on November, 2010. The Pilger Project is a small project that will concentrate efforts on reducing or eliminating influence of direct discharge into the Little Wood River. On the first phase of the project, eight producers along the Little Wood River have been approached and given the opportunity to be a part of the program that, because of the economy and other unforeseen problems, have previously been unable to.

Gooding confluence at the Gooding County Line.

Line to the confluence of the Big Wood River west of Gooding.



Rod Hubsmith standing in deep rock trench

The Wood River SCD would like to thank the many players involved with the Pilger Project, they are as follows: The Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Idaho Associations of Soil Conservation Districts, and the Natural Resource Service, without their help this project and many others would not be considered.

Submitted by Barbara Astle, Wood River Soil Conservation District. For more information, call 208-886-2258 or email Barbara.Astle@id.nacdnet.net

The second phase would encompass the LWR from the Milner to the

The third phase would encompass the LWR for the Lincoln County

We Are Conservation

North Idaho

Benewah Soil & Water Conservation District

Billie Brown, Chair



New culvert versus old culvert (on left)

The Benewah SWCD worked this summer to replace an undersized culvert which was also a fish passage barrier. Working with several partners, including Idaho Department

of Lands, DEQ, Benewah County and Coeur d'Alene Tribe Fish & Wildlife Department, a 24" culvert was replaced with a 60" arch pipe culvert. An interesting challenge was that the culvert being replaced crossed a main road making it not only necessary but crucial to have replacement completed in one day. The installation began at 6 AM and logging trucks began crossing before 3 PM. The culvert was 75' long.

In addition, a ditch relief culvert was installed below the main culvert to divert overflow away from the creek and the road surface between the two culverts was rocked to help control erosion.

The project targeted pollutant (or sediment) load reductions listed in the Upper Hangman Creek TMDL through

the following methods:

- Implementing an aggressive plan aimed at the reduction of sediment transport to streams and tributaries
- Improving fish passage by installing a fish ladder on the Class I stream next spring
- BMP effectiveness will be measured through photo documentation, field inspections, maintenance, and some on-site monitoring

The Benewah SWCD would like to thank the aforementioned partners for the collaborative efforts resulting in the timely and successful completion of this project.

Bonner Soil & Water Conservation District

Herman Collins, Chair

Three of the main focuses of the Bonner SWCD are the Lake*A*Syst Program, the Boat Inspection Program and the Idaho State Forestry Contest.

The Lake*A*Syst Program was initiated in 2005 as a voluntary educational program to assist shoreline property owners in making well-informed decisions about the management of their lakefront property regarding water quality issues. The program is funded currently by five separate grants which support educational outreach, BMPs, new landowner guidebooks for Priest Lake, and two new chapters on "Aquatic Invasive Species" and "Boating and Recreation". A vegetated buffer BMP on the shoreline at Dover Bay has included participation by local high school classes with preparation and planting.

In 2009 we received an ISDA Eurasian Watermilfoil grant for one boat inspection/wash station located at City

Beach in Sandpoint. In 2010 we received another grant for three boat inspection/wash stations that were positioned near Bonner County borders to inspect the majority of boats coming into the county. Between the three stations at Samuels north of Sandpoint, Oldtown west of Sandpoint, and Garwood south of Sandpoint, 12,308 boats were inspected, and 95 were hot washed to rid them of Eurasian Watermilfoil and other aquatic vegetation. The good news was no zebra or quagga mussels were found! 15 employees were hired to man these stations 12 hours a day, seven days a week from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend.

Bonner SWCD has helped sponsor the Idaho State Forestry Contest since its inception in 1983. The project has grown tremendously, and we have been impressed that the teams competing have found a way in our battered econ-



In the Soil Pit at the Idaho State Forestry Contest

omy to continue to attend. We receive tremendous volunteer support from district employees and conservation agencies in Division I – as well as the financial support from local forestry-related businesses. A free barbecue lunch is served, rain or shine! We average around 275 contestants, 115 novices, and 125 volunteers each year – and that's a lot of burgers!

We Are Conservation

North Idaho

Boundary Soil Conservation District

Tom Daniel, Chair



Before: Fish encountered step too high under the highway

The Boundary Soil Conservation District along with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Idaho Fish & Game (IDFG) completed Phase 2 of a fish passage within the Twentymile Creek Watershed in early July 2010.

Phase 1 was completed in 2008. NRCS provided the design and project supervision and IDFG provided the funding.

A series of three in-stream rock weirs were installed within the streambed to allow small trout species to move upstream under the highway during low water. Water was diverted over to one side of the existing highway culvert, which housed previously installed fish baffles inside causing the flow to be stronger for the fish to migrate.

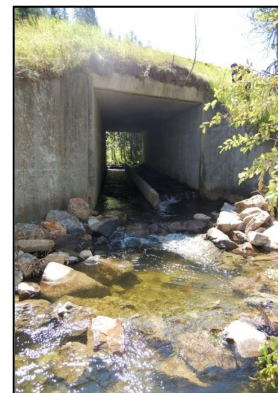
We will continue working within the Twentymile Creek Watershed to fully restore the fish passage all the way

to Deep Creek. This includes two more sites hopefully to be completed by 2011. Phase 3 of this project is underway now, waiting on permit approval, railroad right of way and of course weather permitting.

Work is also being done with the adjacent landowner to install a riparian fence, a hardened livestock crossing, and streambank and shoreline protection.

The district has also been very active in sponsoring the Community Farm Tour every year. This event incorporates agriculture, wildlife habitat, noxious weed education and urban aspects of Boundary County. We pile on a school bus and tour four or five aspects of the county. The district is hard at work trying to educate the public about conservation issues and programs that might be beneficial to all.

For more information, contact Rene' Riddle, Administrative Asst. at (208) 267-3340.



After: Series of rocks built pools and raised streambed allowing fish to jump

Clearwater Soil & Water Conservation District

Terry White, Chair

Implementation projects for both Phase II and Phase III of the Lower North Fork Clearwater River 319 projects were completed. These projects focused on sediment reduction identified in the TMDL plan by installing forest-related Best Management Practices such as road abandonment, road stabilization with culvert up-grades and replacement, grass seeding, conversions of some culverts to bridges, and protection of adjacent streambanks with rock riprap. The last projects were funded in cooperation with Potlatch Timber Corporation, Idaho Department of Lands, and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.



We Are Conservation

North Idaho

Idaho Soil & Water Conservation District

Leon Slichter, Chair

The 7th annual North Central Idaho Grazing Conference and Trade Show is fast approaching. It will be held Tuesday January 4th, 2011 at the Williams Conference Center at LCSC in Lewiston. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the conference starts at 9:00 a.m.

This year's theme is "Keeping Score" and with that thought in mind, our featured speaker for the morning agenda will be Vern France from Gooding, Id. He will be representing Intermountain Beef of Eden. Vern has over 30 years experience in the cattle and bison feeding business. He will address the importance of accurate record keeping and monitoring to enhance forage production and economics for beef cattle production. He will also give an overview of what feedlots are looking for when they purchase calves or yearlings, relative to quality, overall health, vaccination records, and back-grounding practices.

A delicious beef entrée will be served for lunch by LCSC's catering staff, and there will be ample time to tour the Trade Show area adjacent to the Conference during the lunch.

The afternoon session will begin with Bruce Hanson, retired District Conservationist with NRCS of Orofino, giving a "Hands On/How To" regarding planning, record keeping, and monitoring.

This year, in place of the "Producer's Perspective" there will be a panel of six people explaining what each one does relative to grass/forage/and forestry production. Those on the panel will be: Craig Spencer – Grangeville Producer, Cattle, Timber; Pete Wittman – Lapwai Producer, Cattle, Timber, Farming; Craig Hatley – Deary Producer, Cattle, Timber; Jeann Willson – Reubens Producer, Cattle, and Range/Weeds, Idaho Department of Lands; Clark Christensen – Craigmont Producer, Cattle and Forester, Idaho Department of Lands; and Glen Poxleitner – Keuterville Producer, Cattle, Timber and Forester, Idaho Forest Group.

As in the past, there will be a Trade Show featuring the most current information available regarding Ag Equipment, Herbicides, Forage Varieties, Livestock, Feeds, and others. For more information, contact Stefanie Bowman at 208-983-1046 ext. 111 or Stefanie.Bowman@id.nacdnet.net.



Before: Stream Bank Rehab



After: Stream Bank Rehab

Kootenai-Shoshone Soil & Water Conservation District

Sandy Schlepp, Chair

This year, Kootenai-Shoshone Soil and Water Conservation District continues a long-term commitment and partnership with a landowner on Mica Creek to reduce sediment and bacteria from entering Coeur d'Alene Lake at Mica Bay. With a mutual benefit, the success of this action plan relied on the efforts and partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.

A nonpoint source 319 grant and additional support from the Mica Bay Property Owners Association funded the current project. Eight of the thirteen stream bank rehabilitation sites were completed this year, with the remaining to be completed next year. Once completed, the stabilization of 1.25 stream miles will have been addressed.

We Are Conservation

North Idaho

Latah Soil & Water Conservation District

Cody Anderson, Chair

Districts in North Central Idaho are applying a new test to an old theory. They have an idea that by joining forces, they can more successfully implement conservation throughout their five-county region for some programs.

The success of the North Idaho Animal Feeding Operations 319 Project, which began in 2001 as a collaborative effort of Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis, and Nez Perce conservation districts, led Division II districts to believe that other programs could be more effectively and efficiently implemented on a regional scale. As a result, Division II has developed a regional strategic plan. The plan and program concepts identified within the plan received preliminary approval at a Division II meeting held in Burley on November 18th.

Next, the plan will be presented for endorsement by each board within Division II at December board meetings. If the plan is endorsed by each district, then it will officially become the "Division II Re-

gional Strategic Plan." In the early stages of development, consensus was identified as a key provision of the plan. Additionally, only program concepts endorsed by consensus will be incorporated into the plan.

The Division II Regional Strategic Plan will serve as the guiding document for districts in North Central Idaho to plan and implement programs that will have regional scope and purpose. Program concepts endorsed in this plan are expected to better serve the interests of each conservation district if implemented on a regional basis. Care has been taken to omit program concepts where competition could result between Division II and individual districts within Division II.

Questions may be directed to Steve Becker, Division II Director; Kyle Hawley, immediate past Division II Director; or Ken Stinson, Latah SWCD District Manager (kstinson@latahsoil.org or 208-882-4960 ext. 118).



We Are Conservation

North Idaho

Lewis Soil Conservation District

Jerry Reid, Chair



The Lewis Soil Conservation District has developed a strong public outreach program with the local schools. The District sponsors the Annual 6th Grade Field Day, Hatchery in the Classroom, Worm

Races and the IASCD Conservation Poster Contest.

The Lewis County Commissioners get involved by judging the posters at the local level. The three posters selected competed at the Division level in October against students from Idaho, Latah, Nez Perce and Clearwater Conservation Districts. This year we were excited, as

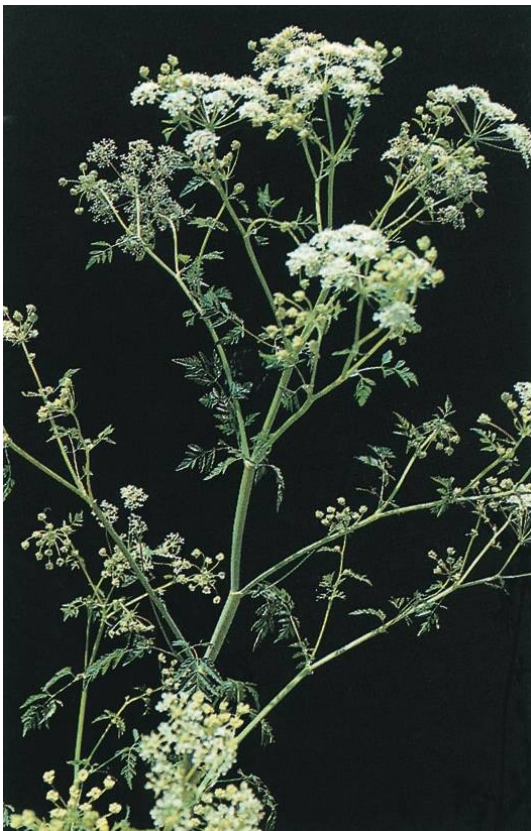
one of our poster contest participants was selected to compete in November at the State level during the IASCD State Conference at Burley, Idaho. There were several excellent posters competing and she did not place at the State level.

Lewis SCD also partners with the cities of Craigmont and Nezperce and the local schools each year for the Community Arbor Day Celebrations. The students plant trees and shrubs around the communities and the schools to provide enjoyment for future generations.



Nez Perce Soil & Water Conservation District

Steve Becker, Chair



Poison hemlock, *Conium maculatum*, is the most poisonous plant in North America and it's growing right here in Nez Perce County.

Poison hemlock was first brought into the States from Europe before people realized it was in fact a noxious weed. It grows up to nine feet tall and has bundles of small, white, umbrella-shaped flowers clustering from the stems. Hemlock flourishes along roads and in pastures, ditches and riparian areas.

Hemlock is extremely poisonous to humans and animals. Humans have been poisoned by mistaking hemlock for parsley or another herb and ingesting it, which can be fatal.

Hugh Jacobs, weed superintendant for Nez Perce County, said even contact with the plant, and especially the root as it is most toxic, can make one extremely sick. "Many people are sensitive to hemlock and will get ill if they are in close proximity to it. People who are sensitive need to avoid all contact with it," Jacobs said.

There are two avenues to take when aiming to control hemlock. The first is by way of chemical control. Chemicals may be sprayed in early spring for best results. Another method is through biocontrol. The defoliating hemlock moth (*Agonopterix alstroemeriana*) larvae consumes leaves, young stem tissue, seeds and flowers. This application works best in late spring.

Jacobs warned that those trying to eradicate hemlock should take precautions. "In my opinion, it is not a plant that can be attacked safely. Don't take chances with it. I wouldn't burn it. The best way to dispose of the plant is bagged and in a landfill."

The Nez Perce SWCD is assisting the County in both treatment methods, but with the plant's firm establishment in the County and longevity of seeds, it will be a long battle for control.

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CONSERVATION
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Our Mission

Provide leadership and assistance for natural resource conservation programs in coordination with other local, state, and federal agencies.

Provide support to 50 Idaho conservation districts. Via these local districts, non-regulatory technical assistance, financial incentive programs, and educational programs are provided to private landowners and land users.

Featured Photo



Crews working on the culvert in the Benewah district take a break for a little meet-and-greet from the local wildlife.
Photo courtesy of Sherry Klaus, Benewah SWCD.

Have an idea for the next Conservation Conversation? Contact Lance Holloway or Kristin Magruder at 208-332-1790 or email Info@swc.idaho.gov. Next issue will feature Southwest Idaho.

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